WHERE IS THE ONENESS?

Supplements:

THAT THEY MAY BE ONE
FIRST CORINTHIANS ONE

KEVIN ELIAS HARTWELL

For Christians in the 21 st Century

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Dedication
This letter is dedicated to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who long for His appearing, and who ache for His Body to be one as He prayed in John 17. May these words stir a fresh hunger for the reality of the oneness that matches God's eternal purpose and gives Him the testimony He desires on the earth.

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My Testimony

When I was about eight years old, I began to think about God. I lived across the street from Grace Assembly, and one day I asked my mother why people went there on Sunday mornings. My mother was not a religious person, but she said that they gathered there to worship God. I decided to attend a few times. I met several other children and was once asked to find Jesus in a coloring book and contribute a nickel donation.

At sixteen, I was eager to obtain my driver's permit. One day, my driving instructor, a young man with long hair and a mustache, took me for a ride in his car. As he was driving through Kirtland Hills, Ohio, he turned to me in the passenger seat and suddenly asked if I believed in God. I quickly replied "no," because I felt uneasy, and then he exclaimed, "Do you know how enjoyable Jesus is?" When he said that, I thought he was out of his mind and wanted to leap out of the passenger window. I had never thought of Jesus as being "enjoyable." I was thankful when the training session came to an end and I exited the vehicle.

In the summer of 1978, I was eighteen and had just graduated from high school. One evening, I was sitting alone on the living room floor in front of the television, watching an engaging historical drama depicting nineteenth-century French society. At one point in the story, a poor man who had stolen bread to feed his family was being pursued by the feared French police. The man came to the door of a priest and asked for shelter. The priest let him in, and the man explained his desperate circumstances. Soon afterward, the police arrived at the priest's door and sternly demanded information. The priest said that he knew nothing, and the police departed.

At that moment, I was so overwhelmed by the mercy the priest had shown the thief that, in tears, I cried out to God and Jesus. I felt something like electricity flow into my innermost being. In that instant, I realized that Jesus and the Father were one. I felt entirely different, completely renewed. I experienced such a hunger for God that the next day I went to Kmart and purchased a Living Bible. From that time forward, the Word of God became fresh and alive to me day by day, and the Lord Jesus became incomparably sweet and wonderful.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures 1 Cor.15:3-4

Where Is the Oneness?

Some may say, "Strange, why even ask that question?" After all, isn't Christianity full of choices? There are the historic traditions, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant, and within Protestantism a whole spectrum of denominations, non-denominations, chapels, fellowships, and movements. Like flavors of ice cream, one might say, just choose the one that suits your taste, attend faithfully, and be content.

But deep within, there is an inner policeman, the Holy Spirit in our conscience, who whispers, No. No divisions. No rival banners. No multiplying of "choices" when the Lord Himself prayed, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21). Some might reply, "But didn't God Himself create divisions, between light and darkness, day and night?" Yes, but those divisions were never meant to divide His people. To say that differences of taste justify divisions among believers is to contradict both the prayer of the Son and the revelation of Scripture, which declares, "there is one body and one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4).

This matter of oneness is not merely a doctrine to me, it is part of my very spiritual birth. When I was born again, the first revelation that flooded my heart was this: "The Father and the Son are one." (John 10:30). I didn't know the Scriptures yet, but something deep within me said, This is true. Later, as I began reading the Bible, I found those very words in John 10, and it was as if God Himself was confirming what He had already shown me in my spirit.

Even before I was saved, I somehow knew, I can't explain how, that the divisions among Christians were wrong. It wasn't a matter of doctrine or church history for me; it was an inner sense, a kind of spiritual instinct. After my conversion, that sense became stronger. How could I now accept division as normal, as though Christ's prayer in John 17 were

optional? He prayed, “that they all may be one… that the world may believe” (John 17:21). Divisions do the opposite, they make the world doubt.

And for many decades now, this question of oneness has gnawed at me, at times like a wild brown bear eating me alive. Everywhere I look, in every direction, all I see is one Christian division after another, sometimes what feels like a so-called church on every street corner, each one having nothing to do with the other. To me, this is nothing less than an unscriptural, spiritual insanity. It grieves me deeply, because it is the exact opposite of the oneness Christ prayed for and died to produce.

Scripture leaves us no room to treat division lightly. God Himself declares that He hates “one who sows discord among brothers” (Prov. 6:19), and Paul tells us plainly that schisms, factions, and schools of opinion are “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19–21). In Corinth, the believers were calling themselves by different names, “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos”, and Paul rebuked them, saying they were “still fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:3). The tragedy is that what Paul condemned as carnal has become accepted as normal. To simply go along with the flow of religious division is not spirituality but the very evidence of the flesh at work. The Spirit always draws believers into one; the flesh always tears them apart.

Some may object and say, “Well, we don’t know what that group believes about salvation. Maybe they teach baptismal regeneration instead of justification by faith, so we must remain separate.” But then I have to ask, what about the church that does share your statement of faith, perhaps even calls itself the First Baptist Church, just like you, why are you unable to be one with the Second or Third Baptist Church down the street? The tragedy is that even those who claim the same name, preach the same gospel, and share the same practices are often divided. The corruption is unreal, and, frankly, spiritually disgusting.

And this burden for oneness is not just a New Testament concern, it runs through the entire Bible. From the beginning, God has been seeking a unified people for His testimony. In the wilderness, Israel was called to be one nation under one covenant, with one tabernacle and one altar. The book of Judges shows how tragic it was when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), and the unity of God’s people was broken. The Psalms declare, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). In the prophets, God grieved over the division of Israel into two kingdoms, promising one day to reunite them under one King and one Shepherd (Ezek. 37:22, 24).

The New Testament fulfills this hope: Christ came to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad (John 11:52). He said, “I am the good shepherd… and I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:14, 16). Paul tells us there is “one body and one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4), and that we were baptized into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). The early church expressed this oneness city by city, simply as “the church in Jerusalem,” “the church in Corinth,” not divided by doctrines, personalities, or preferences. This oneness is not a nice idea, it is central to God’s purpose from Genesis to Revelation, and it is meant to be the visible testimony of Christ on the earth today.

Beloved brothers and sisters, the Lord’s heart has not changed. He still prays that we may be one, not just in doctrine or in spirit, but in a visible testimony that the world can see. We

must admit honestly that our divisions, denominational, doctrinal, cultural, even personal, have damaged that testimony. Instead of showing the world one Body under one Head, we often present a fractured picture that confuses unbelievers and weakens the gospel's impact.

Paul exhorts us to be "diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). This is not something we have to create; it is something we already possess in Christ the moment we are born of the Spirit. But he does not stop there. He says that Christ "gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as shepherd-teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–12). These gifted persons are not a special clergy class, nor are they titles to be claimed in Christendom. They are gifts to the Body, functioning in the context of the local churches to equip all the saints so that every member can participate in the ministry, which is not music ministry, children's ministry, or even outreach programs as commonly understood, but the ministry of life, ministering Christ to one another, for the building up of the Body of Christ.

And what is the goal of this perfecting work? "Until we all attain to the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The oneness of the Spirit (v. 3) is what we must keep diligently today; the oneness of the faith (v. 13) is what we are growing into, a deeper, richer oneness in truth and experience. Paul continues: "so that we may no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (v. 14). How much of today's Christianity is exactly this, blown about by trends, fads, and human opinions! The Lord's way is that, by holding to truth in love, "we may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole Body, being fitted and held together through every joint of the supply… causes the growth of the Body for the building up of itself in love" (vv. 15–16).

Here we see that oneness is not optional, it is the very means and goal of the Body's building up. Without this oneness, there can be no real maturity, no real expression of Christ. The unity that Paul speaks of here is not a man-made ecumenical agreement, but the living oneness that flows from Christ the Head and is worked out practically in the local churches.

And let me be clear: this is not ecumenicalism. Ecumenical efforts, however well-intentioned, often attempt to create an outward unity by agreement, compromise, or coalition, but they cannot produce the living oneness that comes from the Spirit. Years ago, when phone booths were still everywhere, there was a Christian tract that humorously illustrated this: it pictured Christians from every possible background crammed into a single phone booth, with hands, feet, and heads sticking out. It was comical but painfully accurate, man's ecumenical "solutions" cannot bring about true oneness. Only the life of Christ can.

Dear saints, the question "Where is the oneness?" must not just be rhetorical. It must drive us to action. Wherever we live, we can begin to live as brothers and sisters in Christ, meeting on the ground of oneness, refusing to let division have the last word. This is how the Lord's prayer in John 17 will be answered, and how the world will believe that the Father sent the Son. May we be those who treasure this oneness, keep it diligently, and

pursue it unto maturity, until we all arrive at “the oneness of the faith” and match Christ’s heart desire for His Bride.

Closing Word

The burden of this letter is simple: that we would all see and treasure the oneness for which Christ prayed, and begin to live it out where we are. This is not a call to create another movement, denomination, or group, but to return to the ground of the one Body and to the simplicity of Christ. Let us be those who give Him the satisfaction of seeing His prayer answered, that His people would be one, that the world may believe.

Supplement: That They May Be One

This supplement expands on John 17 and shows how the Lord’s prayer still speaks to the church today.

That They May Be One

Letters to the Lord’s People from John 17

Preface — The Lord’s Prayer Still Speaks

Before the cross, before the resurrection, before He ascended to the Father, the Lord Jesus prayed one great, sweeping prayer in John 17. In it, He opened His heart to the Father and revealed what was most on His heart: that His people would be one, filled with His life, and brought into the glory He shares with the Father.

This prayer was not just for the apostles who heard it that night, Jesus said, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). That means He was praying for us, for you and for me, before He went to the cross.

Today, that prayer still speaks. It is not a dead record in an old book. The One who prayed it is still living and interceding for us (Heb. 7:25). He is still calling His people back to Himself, back to oneness, back to the reality of the Body of Christ on the earth.

This is not a secondary matter. The Lord Himself tied the oneness of His people to the very credibility of the Gospel: “that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Division among Christians hides Christ from the nations and weakens the testimony of the cross. Paul reminds us that the Gospel is that “Christ died for our sins… was buried… and rose again the third day” (1 Cor. 15:3–4), but this saving work is not only to rescue individuals. It is to produce a corporate people who live Christ together as His Body, shining as a city set on a hill.

Christians today have been divided for centuries, until what we see is almost unrecognizable compared to the simplicity of the New Testament church. This is not a small or neutral matter, it touches God’s heart, His testimony on the earth, and His purpose for this age. Christ is calling us back, not to invent something new, but to return to Him as our center, our life, and our everything, and to recover the oneness of His Body as expressed in the local churches. This is the necessary remedy.

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Foreword

This little book of letters is not an academic study, nor is it a call to join another group or movement. It is a response to the most important prayer ever prayed — the Lord's prayer in John 17. Hours before the cross, Jesus prayed that His people would be one, that they would be sanctified by the truth, and that they would be perfected into one so that the world might believe.

These letters are written as a wake-up call to twenty-first century Christians. The condition of division among God's people has gone on long enough. While we have preached, taught, built programs, and sent missionaries across the earth, we have neglected the one thing the Lord asked the Father for: the practical oneness of His Body on the earth.

Letter 1 — Father, the Hour Has Come

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." (John 17:1)

The Lord Jesus began His prayer in John 17 with these words: "Father, the hour has come." This was not just any hour, it was the hour for which He came into the world. It was the hour of the cross.

To men, the cross was shame and defeat, but to Christ it was glory. There, the divine life hidden within Him would be released (John 12:24). By dying and rising, He would become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), able to live in all who believe. This was not only to forgive sins but to produce a new people who share His life, the beginning of the church, His Body.

Here is where oneness begins: not with human effort or outward agreement but with a vision of the Son glorified through death and resurrection. When we behold Him, our hearts are melted, our pride is broken, and we are drawn into His fellowship (2 Cor. 3:18).

The cross is not merely the starting point of the Christian life, it is the foundation of the oneness for which Jesus prayed. His death broke down every wall that separates (Eph. 2:14-16) so that His people could be truly one.

Today, we must see this again. Division is not a small problem, it strikes at the very heart of the Gospel. Christ died not only for you as an individual but to bring you into His one Body, to build His church, and to prepare His Bride.

Prayer:
“Lord Jesus, open my eyes to Your glory. Draw me into the reality of Your cross and resurrection. Deliver me from anything that divides me from other believers. Make me an answer to Your prayer for oneness, that the world may believe that You were sent by the Father.”

Letter 2 — Keep Them in Your Name

“Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.” (John 17:11–12)

Before the cross, before the resurrection, before He ascended to the Father, the Lord Jesus prayed one great, sweeping prayer in John 17. In it, He opened His heart to the Father and revealed what was most on His heart: that His people would be one, filled with His life, and brought into the glory He shares with the Father.

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Prayer:
"Holy Father, keep me in Your name. Guard me from gathering under any other name or being divided from Your children. Make my life a testimony of oneness 'as You and the Son are one,' so the world may see Christ in us."

Letter 3 — Sanctify and Saturate Us in the Truth

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." (John 17:17, 19)

The word "sanctify" in John 17 is from the Greek verb ἁγιάζω (hagiazo). It means to make holy, to set apart for God, to consecrate. In the New Testament this is more than a positional setting apart. It is a process of being made holy in reality, a work of God that saturates our being with His life and nature. Christ's use of this word in John 17 shows that what He desired was not merely that His people would be separated from the world, but that they would be filled with God Himself.

In John 17:19 the Lord said that He sanctified Himself, set Himself apart to the Father's will even unto death, for this very purpose. Hebrews 10:10 says we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that the God of peace would sanctify us completely and preserve our whole spirit, soul, and body blameless at the coming of the Lord. These verses show that sanctification is once-for-all in position, progressive in our inner life, and consummated in glory at the Lord's return.

The dispositional aspect of sanctification is crucial here. This is sanctification not as a fence but as a flow, the divine life spreading into every part of us until we are permeated with Christ. The washing of the water in the Word (Ephesians 5:26) renews our mind, softens our heart, and subdues our opinions. Outward organization may bring agreement for a time, but only sanctification by the truth can harmonize believers in a way that bears a lasting testimony of oneness.

Without this sanctification there can be no practical expression of the oneness for which the Lord prayed. Division is not a small matter, it contradicts His prayer and weakens the Gospel's testimony. The only remedy is to allow the Word and the Spirit to carry out this inward work until our whole being is filled with God and stands as His testimony in our city.

Prayer:
Holy Father, sanctify me in the truth and saturate me with Your life. Wash me with the living Word. Renew my mind and preserve my whole spirit, soul, and body for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Deliver me from division and make me part of the oneness Your Son prayed for.

Letter 4 — That They All May Be One

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:20–23)

The word "one" is the Greek ἕν (hen), one in essence and reality. The Lord does not pray for a loose association but for a oneness that matches the oneness of the Father and the Son. This oneness is not outward uniformity or mere agreement, it is organic, a oneness of divine life. The phrase "that they may be one in Us" shows that the source and sphere of this oneness is God Himself.

This prayer was answered in the first-century church. Acts tells us that the multitude of those who believed were "of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). They stood together in the same Spirit with one mind striving for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). This practical oneness was so powerful that it "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). By AD 300, Christians were found at every level of society, in the cities, in the countryside, among slaves, merchants, soldiers, and even in the emperor's household (Philippians 4:22). This unstoppable spread of the gospel was the direct result of the church living out the oneness for which Jesus prayed.

The Lord also prays, "that they may be perfected into one" (v. 23). The Greek word τετελειωμένοι (teteleiōmenoi) means brought to maturity. Oneness must grow and be refined until the Body of Christ reaches its full expression (Ephesians 4:13).

This is not optional. The Lord ties this oneness to the credibility of the gospel: "that the world may believe." Division makes the gospel unbelievable. Today, the divided state of Christianity hides Christ from the world. The recovery of this practical oneness is therefore essential to recover the testimony that convinces the nations that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Paul exhorts us to have no divisions, but to be perfectly joined in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10). This matches the Lord's prayer, oneness not just in life but in thought and in practice.

Without this oneness, the church cannot bear the lampstand testimony in a city. With it, the church becomes the living proof that Jesus is the One sent by the Father.

Prayer:
Father, bring us into this oneness that is in You and the Son. Perfect us into one with all believers where we live. Remove every barrier and division so that the world may believe that You sent Christ and that Your testimony may shine again in power.

Letter 5 — That the World May Know

"…that the world may believe that You sent Me… that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." (John 17:21, 23)

The Lord's prayer is clear: the oneness of His people is the key for the world to believe. Yet the situation today is far removed from what He asked the Father for. Christianity is full of activity, sermons, programs, evangelistic campaigns, mission trips, but there is a famine of

oneness. The Body of Christ is divided into thousands of groups, each with its own name, system, and agenda. This condition does not honor the Lord's prayer; it contradicts it.

The first-century believers lived something far different. Their oneness was so practical and visible that their enemies said, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also" (Acts 17:6). They were of one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). Their life together was the proof that Jesus was the Christ, not only in word but in living testimony. This is what conquered the pagan Roman world: a corporate life that could not be explained apart from God Himself.

Today, Christians speak much of "spreading the gospel," but the greatest hindrance to the gospel is the division among God's people. How can we preach Christ as the Savior when our divided condition hides Him from view? Division preaches a false gospel, one that says Christ cannot keep His own people one.

This must change. The Lord's prayer is not a suggestion. It is a divine demand. The oneness of His Body is not optional, it is the very way the world will know that Jesus is the One sent by the Father and that the Father loves His people as He loves the Son.

Paul pleaded with the Corinthians that there be no divisions among them, but that they be perfectly joined together (1 Corinthians 1:10). To answer the Lord's prayer in our generation, we must drop every name, every party, and every division and gather simply as the church in the place where we live. This is the only way to honor the Son's last prayer before the cross.

Prayer:
Lord, forgive us for treating division lightly while speaking of evangelism. Recover among us the practical oneness You prayed for. Make us one in life, one in mind, and one in practice, that the world may see You and believe.

Letter 6 — That They May Be with Me Where I Am

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24–26)

The Lord ends His prayer with a desire, not simply a request, but the deepest longing of His heart: that His people would be with Him where He is, beholding His glory. Everything He prayed in John 17, giving eternal life, keeping the believers, sanctifying them, perfecting them into one, points to this goal.

This is not merely a promise of going to heaven someday. It is a call to be brought into His presence, His glory, and His corporate expression. Paul says we are being transformed from glory to glory as we behold Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). This present transformation is the preparation of the Bride who will one day be presented to Christ in splendor (Ephesians 5:27).

But today, instead of a prepared Bride, what is seen is a divided corpse. The Lord is not seeking a fractured Body but a glorious Bride who matches Him. For this, God's people must take heed to the real Lord's Prayer in John 17. We must repent of all divisiveness, align

ourselves with the apostles' teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:42), and begin to practice being the one Body in every city, not merely in name, but in reality.

This is the way the world will believe. The testimony of a living, united Body will do more for the gospel than a thousand separate efforts. The Lord will not be satisfied until He has a corporate people, prepared and in oneness, ready to meet Him at His coming (Revelation 19:7).

Prayer:
Lord Jesus, I align myself with Your desire. Forgive every division, every party spirit, every name that is not Yours. Recover in me and in Your people the reality of one Body in one city. Prepare us as Your Bride so that the world may believe, and bring us into Your glory to be with You where You are.

Closing Exhortation

The Lord is seeking a prepared Bride, not a divided corpse. His prayer in John 17 is not a suggestion but a divine requirement. For two thousand years it has stood as a heavenly demand that God's people be one in life, in mind, and in practice.

Now is the time to repent of division, to return to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and to practice being the one Body in each city. This is not only for our blessing — it is for the fulfillment of the Gospel: "that the world may believe."

May these letters bring you to prayer, to action, and to a fresh consecration to Christ, that He may have on the earth what He prayed for: a glorious church, sanctified and in oneness, ready for her Bridegroom.

Supplement: First Corinthians One

This supplement expands on Paul's warning against divisions and calls for practical oneness in every city.

First Corinthians One

No Divisions Among You — Speak the Same Thing — Be Perfectly Joined

Introduction

This message is a prophetic call to return to Christ Himself as our unique content and center, to end divisions in the church, and to recover the apostolic practice of meeting as the church in one locality.

The Lord already has one Body. Our responsibility is to express it — by speaking the same thing, being perfectly joined together, and gathering with all who call on the Lord's name where we live.

This is not a call to form a new denomination or movement, but a call to drop every extra name, every party spirit, and every excuse. It is a call to return to Christ as our wisdom,

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and to prepare to give an account at the judgment seat of Christ for whether we lived in and expressed His oneness.

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First Corinthians One

No Divisions Among You — Speak the Same Thing — Be Perfectly Joined

1:1–3 — The Called Apostle to the Sanctified Saints

"Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul writes as a called apostle, not self-appointed, not elected by a council, but through the will of God. He includes Sosthenes our brother, showing this letter is not a personal crusade but a word borne in fellowship. He writes to "the church of God which is at Corinth," singular, not churches, not denominations. This is the local expression of the one Body of Christ in that city.

Then Paul describes them as "those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus." The Greek perfect tense means a completed act with continuing results, they were sanctified at conversion and remain sanctified now. They are "called saints", the verb 'to be' is absent. They are not called merely to become saints, they are saints now by God's call.

Paul widens the circle to include "all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The verb 'call on' is present tense, showing this was their continual practice. Early Christians were known for audibly invoking the Lord's name. This was their identity. Today this practice has nearly disappeared, many Christians rarely or never call on the Lord's name audibly, yet Paul puts this front and center.

Finally, Paul blesses them with grace and peace, the atmosphere in which all correction must take place.

1:4–9 — Thanksgiving and the Call into Fellowship

"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Though many criticize the church in Corinth as a cesspool of problems, Paul thanks God for them, always. He sees grace before problems. They were enriched in everything, speech (logos) and knowledge (gnōsis), lacking no gift, waiting eagerly for Christ's return. This was a gifted, confirmed church. Their existence was a testimony of Christ.

But this is not just comfort, it is accountability. The Lord will confirm them to the end so they may be blameless at His appearing. Paul reminds them God is faithful and has called them into the fellowship (koinōnia) of His Son, shared participation in Christ Himself. This is not optional, this is the very reason they exist as the church.

1:10–17 — The Thunderclap: Speak Christ, End the Divisions

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

Paul's first charge is about the voice of the church: "that you all speak the same thing." This is not a suggestion but an apostolic requirement. Speaking is powerful: God created by speaking, Christ sustains by speaking, and the church is built by speaking Christ. When Christians speak different things, doctrines, personalities, movements, divisions are inevitable. Paul commands that there be "no divisions", schisma, tears, among them. Division is not harmless but a violent rending of Christ's Body.

He calls them to be "perfectly joined together", katartizō, a word used for resetting a broken bone or mending a net. This is a call to complete restoration, not mere tolerance.

Paul names the party slogans: "I am of Paul… I am of Apollos… I am of Cephas… I am of Christ." He is nipping this in the bud before it matures into sectarian systems. Today we have thousands of such divisions, many named after men: Luther, Calvin, Wesley. We do not condemn these men, we honor them, but we cannot use their names to form separate

churches. God recognizes only the church of God in a locality, not many churches of different names.

To claim that we cannot speak the same thing, cannot be perfectly joined, cannot end divisions is unbelief. It is rebellion against God's revealed will. This is why we need a recovery, a recovery back to Christ as our unique content and center, back to the daily enjoyment of Him personally and corporately, back to the oneness of the church. We must stop making excuses, for we will give account before Christ at the judgment seat.

1:18–25 — The Word of the Cross: God's Power, Not Ours

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The word of the cross, ho logos tou staurou, is the end of human boasting. It is foolishness (mōria) to the perishing but the power of God (dynamis Theou) to those being saved. The cross does not improve human wisdom, it destroys it. God chose a way that offends Jew and Greek alike so that no one can boast. This is why we cannot glory in men, in eloquence, in movements, Christ crucified must be our one message.

1:26–31 — God's Choice Leaves No Room for Boasting

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'"

Paul says, "consider your calling." Not many were wise or mighty or noble, God chose the foolish, the weak, the despised, so that no flesh may glory. Christ has become everything: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. This leaves no room to glory in men, movements, or anything else.

Here the prophetic call becomes practical: Christians must see that the Lord already has one Body. We do not create oneness, we express it. This means beginning to meet as the church in our locality, not as a chapel, fellowship, or denomination, but simply as those who call on

the Lord's name in that place. To have many churches in one city, or to meet under extra names, misses the mark and obscures the oneness of Christ's Body.

This is not organizational but spiritual. We need the Lord to open the eyes of our inner man, to strengthen our regenerated spirit, to see and live the reality of the Body. We must drop our excuses — one day we will all stand before Christ at the judgment seat (1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5). May we be those who spoke Christ, were perfectly joined, and expressed the one Body of Christ in our locality.